

Capacity Building Programs for Library Professionals: Challenges and Opportunity

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Abstract

The quality of a library is identified by its competent staff, dynamic services, and updated resources. The human resources working in the Library and Information Centre are needed to enhance their personal as well as professional level skills and competence for effective delivery of library and information services. The present study discusses on the concept, method, and levels of Capacity Building Programs for library professionals in library and information centres. Further the study discusses on need of capacity building programs and throws lights on some major challenges persist with it.

Keywords: Capacity Building Program, Library Information Centers, Library Professionals, Skills and Competence

1. Introduction

The role and responsibility of present day librarian has gone to a sea change in shifting environment of library. There is change of reading materials from print to electronic format, changing in physical reading room to virtual users' community and so on. A quality library is identified by competent staff, dynamic services, and updated resources. With the help of automation, digital library systems the libraries are in a position to provide a variety of services over a wide range of areas, which were not possible previously. It has been realized that capacity building is a key factor in coping with changes especially in the digital age where tools and technologies evolve in numerous rate. Competencies and skills are the basis of human resource management. In view of these realities, libraries are deeply engaged in training and developing the capacity, competencies and skills of their staff to cope with the trends.

The present study is a theoretical overview of the concept, need, and level of capacity building in Library and Information Centers. Also the study highlights about the issues and challenges inherited with capacity building programs.

Concept of Capacity Building

The concept 'capacity building' is otherwise referred as manpower development, human resource development, professional development, staff development, or personal development. Capacity building is the process by which individuals and organizations obtain, improve, and retain the skills, knowledge, tools, equipment, and other resources needed to do their jobs competently. It allows individuals and organizations to perform at a greater capacity. The present day paradigm shift of library from print to electronic environment has taken the role and level of knowledge of library professionals to a different level. So, capacity building of the human resources in any library and information centers has been an indispensable task.



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The concept of capacity building is defined by different organizations/ institutions in their own way. The Business Dictionary defines Capacity Building as "Planned development of (or increase in) knowledge, output rate, management, skills, and other capabilities of an organization through acquisition, incentives, technology, and/or training."

The United Nations Development Programme in its Netherland session defines Capacity Building as "the creation of an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal frameworks; institutional development, including community participation (of women in particular); and human resources development and strengthening of managerial systems."

The United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction defines "Capacity development is the process by which people, organizations and society systematically stimulate and develop their capacities over time to achieve social and economic goals. It is a concept that extends the term of capacity-building to encompass all aspects of creating and sustaining capacity growth over time. It involves learning and various types of training, but also continuous efforts to develop institutions, political awareness, financial resources, technology systems and the wider enabling environment." It is clear to understand the concept of capacity building for library and information centers that, it is a method of preparing professionals with the understanding, skills, access to information, knowledge, and training that facilitate them to perform their job effectively.

Need of Capacity Building

Capacity building in a library deals with the capacity development of staff, resources, and technology used for dissemination of services. The main goal of

capacity building is to enhance the ability to address the day to day demand of the library and enables the library and its staff to develop competencies and skills that can make them more effective and sustainable in the changing library scenario.

The profession is under transformation due to the impacted changes in library resources, and services. Strong influence of ICT has also transformed this profession into a divergent subject of practice. The shifting of library services from manual system to automated library system, implementation of RFID systems, networked library system, consortia based services, etc. have resulted in the development of several skills and competencies of LIS professionals to work in the new environment.

Level of Capacity Building

Based on the organizational structure and service module of an organization the level of capacity building may vary from institution to institution. However, in a library and information centre the kinds of competencies and skills required for library professionals should be as follows.

Personal Level of Capacity Building

In personal level of capacity building of LIS professional is an ethical level of capacity building. It's a development of condition of mindset of the professional to adopt and attuned with the users, resources, and technologies in the library. The professionals in individual level are to build and enhance the day to day practical knowledge and skills and engaged themselves in the process of learning and adapting to change.

- ❖ Communication skills- Better communication gives better result. If there is a gap in communication, it effects to the whole process

of the service delivery. Library professionals are the communicator of the values of the library services to decision makers, staff and users. So, a good communication skill is essential for a library professional for better performance and service delivery.

- ❖ Logical and analytical skill- The library professionals must be logical and analytical by nature. As changes are going on in libraries, they should understand the benefits and effect of the changes upon users and society. Simultaneously, they can evaluate the quality of the existing resources and services and assess the need of the users.
- ❖ Presentation skill- There is need of highly effective presentation skills of library professionals. They must have presentation skills to highlight the consequence of the tools and technology used in the library. Through their good presentation skills they can motivate the users towards library and its services.
- ❖ Time management skill- Time management skills deals with the performing of a work in due time. The fourth law of library science pronounces "Save the time of the readers". The motto of library is delivery of right information to the right user in right time. So, time management skills are highly essential for the professionals working in a library.
- ❖ Human resource management skill- Human resources management skills involve with the capacity to interact effectively with the human resources working in the library. This skill is highly needed for a professional to work in complex situations.

Professional Level of Capacity Building

Capacity building is meant for professionals or the human power involved in an organization for which the program is planned for. The main motto of capacity building is to make the human resources more capable and skillful to be adaptive in modern library information centers. This level of capacity building mainly deals with the enhancement of day to day working level competence of a professional. The following are the some of the required skills and competence needed to be developed among the professionals.

- ❖ Computer literacy- In day to day operation of modern library system the application of computer cannot be ignored. So computer literacy i.e. working knowledge on MS office, CDROM database management, etc. is highly essential for library information professionals for effective and timely delivery of the library services.
- ❖ Internet literacy- Internet literacy deals with web publishing, website administration and maintenance, website design and web hosting knowledge of the professionals.
- ❖ Networking knowledge- Knowledge on network system administration and maintenance.
- ❖ Information search and retrieval competency- Knowledge of federated search, Boolean search, Bibliographic and full text database search, etc.
- ❖ Operational knowledge of equipment and tools in use- Kiosk, OPAC, RFID etc.

Methods Of Capacity Building Programmes

The capacity building programs for LIS professionals is a planned work to enhance the

knowledge level, and professional skills of the professionals that the organization need to survive, adapt and thrive in the fast-changing world. Here are some of the methods which are common for capacity building programmes of LIS professionals.

- a) **Intensive training course:** It is a structured training program which can be conducted in workplace or in another venue. The training program can be designed with numerous learning objectives with assessment programs.
- b) **Technical expertise/ advice:** It is a technical and professional based training program. The training program focused on the enhancement of technical knowledge of the professionals.
- c) **Mentoring:** Mentoring involves passing on tips from experienced, knowledgeable professional to less experienced professional.
- d) **Internship:** A short period of training program to the professionals. Professionals do visit different renowned library information centre and take internship of one week, one month etc. to develop their skill and competence.

Challenges & Opportunities

The followings are some of the major challenges and opportunities that persist with capacity building programmes for library and information science professionals;

- a) **Problem of succession:** The major challenge confronting library and information science professionals is to create second row professionals in every organization. The new generation professionals are the hungry of money rather hungry of knowledge. Many young librarians change their profession. So in

this case the profession do not get a qualified professionals who can adapt in the changing environment of the profession.

- b) **Inadequate curriculum:** The curriculum of library and information science is not updated from time to time. There is a gap between LIS practitioners and LIS preachers. New professionals coming to this profession are less aware about the recent trends in the Library and Information Science. So it's a challenge to make them aware and compatible with the system.
- c) **Professionalism:** Many people in the society not sure that what the library professionals exactly do in the library. They are not aware that this profession is a noble profession which is not meant for charging, discharging and shelving of books. Sometimes people ask that, is librarianship a profession? This misconception has indirectly impacted upon many talented professionals to switch over the profession.
- d) **Lack up updated information resources:** Majority of the library information centres are not equipped with modern amenities and technology in the library. Budget cut, non exposure, negligence by the authority, lack of knowledge are the reasons behind the poor collection of the library information centres. Recent trends in the libraries like use of library management software, creating institutional repository, searching through full text databases, use of RFID are major challenges for such professionals working in this environment.

Some major opportunities of capacity building programs in a library and information centre are;

- ❖ Development of training programs for staff,
- ❖ Development of new training modules fitting to the target groups,
- ❖ Development of new curriculum for new or existing program,
- ❖ Development of communications website and Social Media,
- ❖ Development of communications with users and partners,
- ❖ Development of communication with Research Community,
- ❖ Increase productivity of the organization,
- ❖ Improve the worth of work and raise moral among professionals,
- ❖ Implement new policies and regulations, and
- ❖ Sustainable growth and development of the organization.

Conclusion

The library and Information Centers should take initiative for regular staff trainings and orientation programs. To work in a pedagogical shifting environment of library, the human resources should be well trained and motivated for enhancement of their performance and capacity. The following recommendations like short term training or internship programs for library professionals, staff exchange programs, Librarian's Development Programs, conducting of workshops and seminars for library professionals are very essential programs to make them competent and adaptive with the ongoing trends of library system.

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